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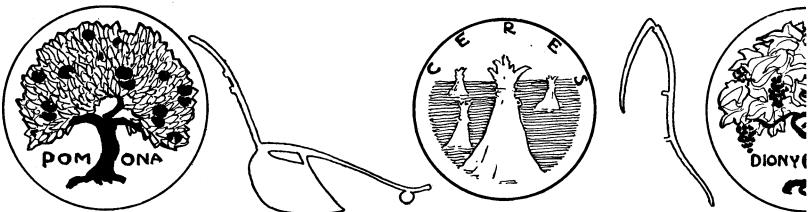
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## ART AT SCHOOL FESTIVALS.

IN days past the festival has always been one of the chief factors in arousing the art impulse.

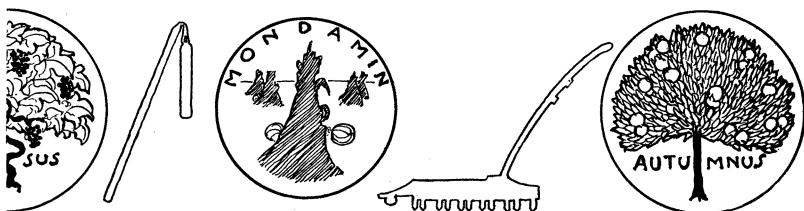
It was not only that the festival gave new tasks to the constructive artist in the temporary apparatus and permanent monument, in the recording picture or glorifying statue, and in all the thousand forms of symbolic or decorative art invoked to aid; but it called the artist, so to say, into being, gave him breath and nurture, surrounded him with exquisite forms and glowing colors, and with everything that could quicken the activity of eye and hand. Under the forcing atmosphere of the festival the plant of art shot up apace.<sup>1</sup>

That the festival in school is a natural occasion for artistic activity seems therefore obvious. Here follows a statement of what has been done decoratively at two school festivals at the Ethical Culture School.

The Harvest Festival came at Thanksgiving time, and the exercises were given by the seventh grade. It consisted of three parts: (1) "The Call to the Harvest Feast" (pagan in character); (2) "Old English Harvest Home Celebration;" (3) "The Spirit of Harvest Home in America."

Some weeks beforehand, in considering the possibilities of decoration for the background of the stage, it was decided that the autumn deities might be suggested symbolically. The plan was discussed in the art lesson with the eighth grade. Careful consideration of the conditions to be met claimed first attention.

<sup>1</sup> G. BALDWIN BROWN, *The Fine Arts*.



The limited time and limited technical knowledge of the class were frankly recognized. The class was led to see the need of so planning the scheme that several could work, each on a separate part, and that those parts should fall into unity. A bold flat treatment, with simple masses of autumnal colors, seemed reasonable. The plan was sketched on the board. The aim of the teacher was so to guide the thinking of the pupils that they would naturally arrive at a reasonable, simple, and tasteful scheme. Having decided on the five circles and the symbols to be used, each pupil made a sketch of the one he chose. The best sketch of each symbol was selected, and the five pupils who had made the sketches worked out the final decorations. The size of each of the three larger circles was twenty-six inches in diameter; of the two smaller, twenty inches. They were spaced across the back of the stage as a frieze, against a dull green hanging. The material used for these decorations was strawboard, and the paint was opaque designers' color, applied in flat poster fashion. The tones used were green, red, yellow, purple, brown, and black for outlines. The implements were cut out of the strawboard by a sixth pupil, and left unpainted. Of course, this frieze was but one factor in the total effect of the stage during the festival. Actual sheaves of wheat, vegetables piled high on an altar (in the first scene), the autumnally colored costumes of the children—all lent their effect. These things were all considered in planning the color and treatment of the frieze which is here illustrated by an outline sketch.

Immediately after the Thanksgiving exercises, the festival committee turned attention to the Christmas program inspired by the suggestions of Mr. Chubb, a somewhat ambitious scheme



was undertaken in the high-school art class. The thought suggested was a Christmas processional of the ages—a suggestion of the universality of the Christmas celebration. Egyptians, Romans, Druids, shepherds and sages, mediæval and modern peoples, were to appear. The recurring torch and candle, as well as the star of Bethlehem, were to symbolize the festival of light.

The boys and girls entered into the plan with great interest. As in the other case, the problem was carefully considered as a whole. It was decided to treat the figures in silhouette. A very rough sketch was presented to the class, to indicate very vaguely the relation of the groups of figures to each other. Then each pupil chose the section that appealed to him most strongly. The compositions were then worked out carefully by the individual pupils just one-third the size of the final decoration. When completed, these sketches were squared off, and thus drawn up full size. The decoration was thirty inches high. The paper used was of a grayish green, while the figures were in a dark purple-gray. The effect was lightened by the pale yellow of the torch, candle, and cross form that indicated the star, and still further enlivened by a bright red border line, and red initials in the quotation.

As will be seen from the illustration, not all of the original thought was carried out. One or two of the pupils failed to complete their sections; but altogether the result was decorative, and, considering the lack of technical knowledge of some of the pupils, it was as satisfactory as could reasonably be expected.

From these problems pupils learn to think of decorative art in



a large way in relation to surroundings, and as embodying the spirit of an occasion. They also learn the proper subordination of the individual idea to the general effect. They see that individually their work attains success only as it takes its place in the whole scheme. This subordination of the individual to the whole does not, however, prevent each from exercising much freedom of choice and originality within his own portion of the design.

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